A STUDY CONTRASTING DIFFERENTIATED AND COOPERATIVE LEARNING STYLES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO MOTIVATION OF K-5 STUDENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

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While not a new phenomenon, student motivation in the elementary classroom remains a constant challenge for educators. Research has shown that children are spending lesser amounts of time participating in interactions that are not intrinsically motivating. Hence, a diversity of relations needs to take place inside the classroom reaching out to the many learning styles children possess, and pinpointing what motivates children inherently. Ironically, students have become passive participants in our classrooms. Fragmentation of pedagogical methods, task separation, disconnected topics and student isolation is all too commonplace. If crossing curricular boundaries and finding the student voice is mandatory for mastery, then engaging students in the classroom becomes a

question of how the students perceive the course work. Direct teaching strategies will not work to motivate children if assessed for their inherent value alone. Teachers will need to find different pedagogical strategies for promoting curiosity and worth. In exchange, educators will help students find meaningful pay-offs for self-improvement and help tie the curriculum into their present and future lives.

The objectives of this study were two fold. One, the study contrasted two styles of learning, differentiated and cooperative, and their relationship to the motivation of children. This study identified how these two teaching techniques could be utilized in an elementary classroom to reduce the challenge of the ‘lack of motivation’ in unchallenged children. Two, the research took the results of this study and formulated recommendations to administrators and other professional educators.

This study was conducted thru a comprehensive review, and critical analysis of research and literature focused upon the objectives of the study.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Barbara McCombs, author of *Understanding the keys to motivation to learn (n.d.)*, studied the motivation of students in today's society. She researched the ongoing question of why some students have a motivation to learn, and others do not. McCombs (n.d.) stated:

> Trying to reach students who seem to have lost interest in learning and are displaying no motivation to learn in school, or who are defeated or turned off to for any number of reasons, is a frustrating and all too common experience for teachers in today's classrooms and schools (p. 1).

Why is student motivation to learn a problem in many traditional educational systems? In contrast, what is present in the schools where motivation does not seem to be a key issue for students and administration? A student who is self-motivated and self-directed can manage his or her own tasks, but are still instinctively enticed by topics that are of personal interest. Intrinsic value of education does not seem to occur without this natural stimulation of learning tasks, that are perceived as exciting or personally meaningful. To understand this, we need to look at what distinguishes tasks individuals perceive as meaningful or relevant, versus those perceived as being boring, tedious, meaningless, or irrelevant.

As engaging students in basic curriculum becomes more difficult, so does the task of finding meaningful delivery systems for that curriculum. A half-century

ago John Dewey commented, “The most important attitude that can be formed in schools is that of the desire to go on learning” (Covington & Steel, 1996, p. 3). Walker, states: “Everything a teacher does in the classroom has a positive or negative effect on student’s motivation” (Walker, 2002, p. 1). Ongoing education is a key to the success of future generations. The delivery of competence and a sense of control may satisfy a students’ need to feel connected to the curriculum, and are worthwhile endeavors for educators. Walker (2002) further states:

> This includes the way information is presented, the kinds of activities teachers use, the ways teachers interact with students, the amount of choice and control given to students, and opportunities for students to work alone or in groups. Student’s react to who teachers are, what they do, and how comfortable they feel in the classroom (p. 1).

Strategies and teaching methods are in question. A direct teaching style, in which the teacher stands in front of the classroom, presents information, the audience takes notes or simply listens, and the teacher retires to a desk to attend to daily duties, is no longer an acceptable means of delivering information to learners. Taking into account the many learning styles, we have quickly and simply alienated many learners who do not comprehend quickly or are able to dissect information using this direct teaching strategy. Yet, increasingly we find educators, at all levels, participating in this lethargic nonuser friendly tactic.

The architecture of classroom dynamics is in question. Because the doing of the task is what prepares the learner for real life, it is important that the student be able to actively engage in such tasks. Simulations of all kinds can be built.

However, the designer must understand the situation well enough that the simulations will be accurate (Hinrichs, n.d.).

The vast majority of researchers believe that a teacher's job is to open the minds of the student's; it is to pose questions in which the students become interested. Students will then find their own personal intrinsic value, and develop the 'desire' for researching and developing techniques, that will in the end, bring them to sound conclusions. This can be a daunting task for educators and administrators; one that many are not willing to accept and some even deny needs addressing. The key is to give the learner only the information that is necessary, and only at that moment in which they need it to propel them to the next level of cognitive domain. Hinrichs (n.d.) stated: "academia has been able to keep a coherent system together by merely coasting on the inertia built up by our culture's rich intellectual tradition" (p. 1).

The government seems to feel that intensification of what has been done for years is mandatory. Nevertheless, can we expect the *'same old'* to work at an even higher intensity, when it is not working to motivate students currently? Covington and Steel (1996) stated:

> If I had a situation in which one third of my products (students) fell off the assembly line along the way (national dropout rate prior to high school graduation) and two thirds of those remaining did not work right in the end, the last thing I would do is speed up the conveyor belt (p. 2)?

Effective solutions do require a shift in thinking concerning the concept of motivation. Even students who are motivated learners are sometimes motivated

for the wrong reasons. “Many students are motivated to avoid failure and do not participate at all, others try to defy the system they find irrelevant to their lives, and yet others escape being evaluated on a narrow set of abilities and skills in which they possess a wider array” (Covington and Steel, 1996, p. 3).

We must destroy the myth that learning in school should be based on an ability game. Grades and material incentives can too easily become the yardstick by which one’s worth is determined, hence, disintegrating intrinsic motivational concepts such as curiosity and self-satisfaction. Once learners begin to associate themselves with an outside influence, internal motivation begins to dwindle and external factors begin to over-take them, thus beginning the path of a misconstrued reality of self. Unfortunately, this happens at such a young age that children develop false personhood. Similarly, Alphie Kohn (1999) develops the philosophy that:

> Boredom is mistakenly swept off by parents, educators and administrators as a natural response to school or mistakenly attributed to the assignments’ being too easy. It doesn’t occur to us to wonder with Dewey whether each child has to ‘leave his mind’ behind because there is no way to use it in the school (p. 64).

Natural responses do not deprive learners of motivating values. Responding naturally requires that students are trusted to find the correct responses of their own volition. Consequently, learners associate topics with their own lives and develop responses that are regarded as valuable to them, and which develops a need in them to know more. Sharp lines are drawn between academic and

nonacademic pursuits. “Activities that help kids become good learners are seen as quite different from activities that help them become good people” (Kohn, 1999, p. 65). Can we erect a wall between who we are and what we are learning? Can we make our students sit in their chairs and pay attention without them interceding thoughts from their own world?

Schunk, (cited in Ames & Ames, 1989) stated that: “the development of self-efficacy for learning is hypothesized to affect effort expenditure and persistence” (p. 14). Especially when facing obstacles, individuals who hold a high sense of efficacy ought to work harder and persist longer than those who doubt their capabilities. However, this is not always true. Schunk, (cited in Ames & Ames, 1989) goes on to say that self-efficacy is definitely not the only influence on behavior. “For if requisite skills are lacking high self-efficacy alone will not produce competent performances” (p. 15).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was two fold. One, to contrast two styles of learning, differentiated and cooperative, and their relationship to the motivation of children at the elementary level. This study also identified how these two teaching techniques can be utilized in an elementary classroom to increase motivation and reduce the number of unchallenged children. Two, to take the results of this study and formulate recommendations to administrators and other professional educators. This study was conducted by means of a comprehensive review and critical analysis of research and literature focused upon the objectives of the study during the spring and summer of 2002.

Research Objectives

The research objectives were:

1. To determine that differentiation of learning is an effective teaching strategy to diversify the delivery of education and increase motivation for all learning styles in the classroom.
2. To determine that cooperative learning is an effective teaching method to diversify education and increase motivation for all learning styles in the classroom.
3. To formulate effective recommendations/interventions to administrators and other professional educators for enhancement of teaching strategies and increased level of student motivation in the elementary classroom.

Definition of Terms

For clarity of understanding, the following terms are defined.

Cooperative Learning – Students working together in a group, small enough that everyone can participate on a collective task that is being clearly assigned. Moreover, a student is expected to carry out their task without the direct and immediate supervision of the teacher.

Differentiation – The dissection of curriculum and the assimilation of it back to a whole using hands on, environmental, and social criteria, developed from and for the varying cognitive levels, of the present student body.

Self-Efficacy – Refers to a student's belief of their capabilities to effectively apply the knowledge and skills they already possess and thereby learn

new cognitive skills.

Motivational Equity – Sharing of common reasons for learning.

Intrinsic Motivation – Behaviors driven by the natural satisfaction and pleasure one receives from engaging in those activities.

Extrinsic Motivation – Extrinsically motivated behaviors are not performed because of an intense interest to engage in a particular activity. Extrinsically motivated behaviors are instrumental in nature and are considered a means to an end, and are controlled behaviorally.

Amotivation – Is considered the lowest level of autonomy on the continuum of motivational styles. Individuals who are amotivated are neither intrinsically nor extrinsically motivated. Amotivation is the belief that actions are the result of something that is beyond their control.

Limitations

The fact that this study is a critical analysis of literature and does not include a measurement instrument limits this research to personal interpretation of chosen literature. It is assumed that all sources utilized are viable and in the frame of the chosen topic.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter is a critical review of literature that contrasts two teaching styles. The first is a differentiated-teaching strategy and the second will encompass cooperative-teaching strategies. Both are used in the discussion of naturally maximizing intrinsic and extrinsic motivation levels of children, and the need to increase this impetus. Specifically, the literature will reveal that use of these teaching mechanisms as important to the development of the whole child. This component naturally leads to the awareness that direct teaching methods are not only outdated, but also ineffective. Options that a classroom teacher may choose that are appropriate for struggling as well as advanced learners and students from varied cultural backgrounds, will be explored. This will prove to be a dynamic process that is intertwined with theory and realism and if utilized may touch the inner strengths of every student.

Differentiated Learning Strategy

Teachers in mixed ability classrooms face many challenges. Each year teachers are presented with a new group of children, and are expected to build on the accumulated skills of their previous years. This new set of skills is most commonly sent forth to professional teachers in an approved for children format, by district offices, carrying the stamp of approval of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. In life, children are able to pick foods they prefer, clothing styles they like, and they are able to make decisions and choices based on

cultural background, ethnicity, and family mores. We appreciate these differences in our adult lives. As adults, we can comprehend why people choose to be different and how their choices have dramatically affected their lives. If we all lived in the same neighborhood, would we all work for the same business? If we live on opposite sides of town or in different cities, do we not take various means of transportation to our places of work? If a group reads the same piece of literature, do they all comprehend, find the same meaning, and create the same opinions of the text? Why do we expect the students in our classrooms to be cognitively stimulated by the same type of teaching strategy day after day? "What we share in common makes us human. How we differ makes us individuals. In a classroom with little or no differentiated instruction, only student similarities seem to take center stage" (Tomlinson, 2001, p.1).

If we choose to look at ourselves to create a stimulating environment, we must admit that we all learn in different ways. Some learn by hearing, others by doing, some may like group work or prefer to work alone, still others may learn the first time given information and others after much repetition. To be a good teacher we must attend to all of these needs. A teacher, who is trying to change to fit the needs of his or her students, is generally at the beginning stages of utilizing a differentiated way of teaching. Tomlinson (2001) stated:

> At its most basic level, differentiating instruction means 'shaking up' what goes on in the classroom so that students have multiple options for taking in information, making sense of ideas, and expressing what they learn. In other words, a differentiated classroom provides different avenues to

> acquiring content, to processing or making sense of ideas, and to developing products so that each student can learn effectively (p. 1).

Differentiated instruction is proactive. It allows the student's choices and freedom to pursue their studies at their own level and input their own personalities. "Assessment is no longer predominately something that happens at the end of a unit to determine 'who got it'. Assessment routinely takes place as a unit begins to determine the particular needs of individuals in relation to the unit's goals"(Tomlinson, 2001, p. 4). Utilizing effective differentiated teaching strategies will allow students to demonstrate a broad range of dexterity, addressing the need of the teacher to assess individual comprehension levels. By definition "Differentiation is the process by which a global or unified entity is refined, clarified, or broken down into and more specific subunits" (Whitbourne & Weinstock, 1979, p. 7).

It can be unnatural for the teacher to separate content, process, and product because children process ideas as they read content, think while they create products, and conjure ideas for products while they encounter ideas in the material they use (Tomlinson, 2001). What we teach is what we want students to learn. Consequently, we can adapt what we teach or modify how we give students access to what we want them to learn. Tomlinson, (2001) gives this example:

> If I ask some students to begin work with fractions in 3rd grade, while others are working hard to master division, I have differentiated what the students are learning. Similarly, I may elect to assign students to spelling

> based on their current spelling skills rather than having all students work with a 4th grade spelling program when some of the learners spell at a 1st grade level and some at a high school level. On the other hand, I keep what students learn relatively the same and change how I give them access to it if I encourage advanced students to read a novel rapidly and with independence while I find additional time for struggling readers to read the same novel, and use peer partners to support their reading as well. Sometimes, however, it seems to make better sense to change what we teach as well. The latter is especially sensible when we are teaching a linear progression of skills, such as spelling or math computation (p. 72).

The process of differentiation is broken into a mixture of individual, whole-class and group instruction. For example, to establish a clear sense of community, whole group instruction may be utilized to present broad concepts that need to be presented to all students. Students may then self select groups or personal areas of interest, and break off into smaller working groups. At this point, individual pupils may research their area of interest to bring back to the small group, and after completion of the group project, present back to the group as a whole. This allows each person flexibility for range in skill level, it allows multiple intelligences to flow freely, provides a physical environment that is safe for him or her psychologically, and freedom to do research on an issue that is of personal interest. Instructors may manipulate this process in any way they see fit to produce the desired result. Groups may be chosen for the students, topics may be narrowed, but ultimately students are allowed to input themselves into

the process and devise their output providing intrinsic motivation and a sense of self-efficacy.

Product assignments should help our student rethink, use, and extend what they have leaned over the course of the unit. Products are an important step and become and excellent means of assessment. High-quality product assignments take much thought on the teachers' part. We want to glean from the student what information they have learned and can apply. Product assignment should stretch students in application of understanding and skill as well as in pursuit of quality (Tomlinson, 2001). Support of students in the mode of expression they prefer to utilize, will allow them be feel free to experiment within their comfort zone.

Ignoring the multiple intelligence aspect of the differentiated teaching style would eliminate a crucially necessary component. Multiple intelligence theory makes one of its greatest contributions to education by suggesting that teachers need to expand their repertoire of techniques, tools, and strategies. In a study conducted by Goodlad, and presented by Armstrong (2000), researchers observed more 1000 American classrooms nationwide and found nearly 70 percent of classroom time was consumed by 'teacher talk'-mainly teachers talking 'at' students giving instructions, and lecturing. The next most observed activity were students doing written assignments, much of this work coming from standard directions in workbooks or on worksheets.

Armstrong (2000) further stated:

> The theory of multiple intelligences functions not only as a specific remedy to one-sidedness in teaching, but also as a “metamodel” for organizing and synthesizing all the educational innovations that have sought to break out of this narrowly confined approach to learning. In doing so, it provides a broad range of stimulating curricula to “awaken”, the slumbering brains that Goodlad fears populate our schools (p. 38).

One example of how multiple intelligence theory fits directly into the differentiated classroom is the utilization of various teaching strategies, which are not by and large, found in the traditional classroom. In the multiple intelligence and differentiated classroom you may find the teacher shifting her method of presentation from linguistic to spatial to musical and so on, often combining strategies in creative ways (Armstrong, 2000). Certainly, there is always a place in the classroom for a teacher to write on the black board for the purpose of modeling and teaching techniques. What you will find in a differentiated classroom are pictures drawn to illustrate specific points, music playing for relaxation and study time and the use of audiovisual materials to enhance spatial and or visual learning.

Learning is not just knowing the right answer (Morgan & Saxton, 1994). Learning is comprehending material presented in a variety of ways over a period of time (Harris, 2002). Differentiated education tries to meet students at the level they are at, and develop skill through various means. It seems a common sense approach to mixed-ability classrooms.

Grading does not have to be difficult in the differentiated classroom. Think of it as practicing piano. The piano student is not graded or judged until after much practice and effort is exerted. Why does a school feel the need to grade or judge every piece of work, which is used as a tool, to get to the end product, 'knowledge'? This way of thinking becomes part of a new classroom philosophy for the students. How rewarded the students would feel and how intrinsically motivating it would be for students to practice and present rather than be graded at every step. We should realize as professional educators that most people have a learning curve. There is always a beginning point where new information is introduced. We do not spontaneously grasp, understand and apply information. Like a piece of artwork, or the musician practicing for a recital, we need to give students time to absorb, reflect and relate information to the world around them before the 'grade' is given. As students flow naturally into this new web, they will be spun with motivation and excitement and become more at ease with the learning process. Students will come to understand that if they do not grasp a concept immediately, they will have time to do so as the process of learning climbs and scaffolds to new levels, interrelating past and current materials.

Providing and or finding building level support can be difficult. Teachers are often lulled back into the trap of traditional classrooms, which they are much more familiar. It can be difficult to convert one teacher, let alone a whole school of teachers. The use of differentiated teaching strategies is different, but our students are different. Differentiated education addresses the needs of all our students and is especially important in an environment where all cognitive levels

and disabilities present themselves in the same environment. Creating new rituals is difficult; watching our children fail in everyday life is brutal. Tomlinson (2001) stated the following:

> "She does not seek or follow a recipe for differentiation, but rather combines what she can learn about differentiation from a range of sources to her own professional instincts and knowledge base to do whatever it takes to reach out to each learner" (p. 7).

Each learner must ultimately grasp what the teacher is trying to teach. By bringing individual life experience to the classroom, students are able to input much more than a teacher can know herself or even begin to pull out of the proverbial 'curriculum bag'. Allowing diversity of thought freely in our classrooms is a new concept for many teachers. How do we as teachers let students bring their own personality into our classroom and maintain organization and task completion? Freedom to be oneself and have choices does not necessarily equate to chaos in the classroom. "Choices are carefully designed within safe and clear structures so that kids can experience the delight of having a limited number of choices to make instead of needing to decide every moment what to do" (Armstrong, 1998, p. 61).

The goal of a differentiated classroom is maximum growth from a current level of understanding. What we do not want, are students who think that some assignments may be easier than others or visa versa. This type of environment would take us back to the original direct teaching strategy that we are trying to avoid. We want each pupil to maintain integrity and not feel a part of an order or

list where they are ranked top to bottom. Neither do you want people to stand out, nor do you want to be able to define ‘normal’. Tomlinson (2001) suggested that in a differentiated classroom, a number of things are always going on. Over time, all students complete assignments individually and in small groups, and whole group discussion takes place. Sometimes the students create the standards for success and often it is a collaborative effort. Tomlinson also discussed the many pathways that we need as teachers to accommodate learning styles. In a true differentiated classroom, all learning styles and backgrounds are taken into account. Students become part of a group working toward the greater cause. Individually they contribute personality and character traits into the pedagogy that influence the base and scaffolding of knowledge for all involved.

Cooperative Learning Strategy

The American educational system has been under fire for many centuries. Increasingly criticized as academically ineffective and dangerous for its students, the institutionalized means of education in our country seems, at time, to be on the verge of collapse (Grisham & Molinelli, 1995). Schools are a microcosm linked to the problems of the larger society. The problems of a fluctuating economy, as well as general cultural upheaval, which are apparent in many urban centers, is characterized on a daily basis in America’s classrooms (Grisham & Molinelli, 1995). Grisham and Molinelli (1995) go on to say that: “These challenges take the form of declining resources, increasing class sizes,

and an extremely heterogeneous student population-presenting a dilemma of enormous proportions for the traditional teacher-centered classroom" (p. 3).

Cooperative learning has been widely researched since the 1970's. Most teachers use some sort of group work when attempting to saturate children with the enormous amounts of state and federally mandated material required for adequate performance on standardized tests.

Cooperation is one of the most important human activities. Slavin (1982) of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland stated:

> Elephants have survived as a species because of their size; cheetahs because of their speed; humans because of their ability to cooperate for the good of the group. In modern life, people who can organize as a group to accomplish a common end are likely to be successful in business, in sports, in the military, or in virtually any endeavor. In fact, one of the few areas of human activity in which cooperation is not a primary focus is in the schools (p. 5).

To illustrate this point imagine a typical classroom. The teacher asks Sarah to spell "chief". "C-H-E-I-F," she says. The teacher says, "No. Can anyone help Sarah?" ten hands shoot up, and the teacher chooses Blake, who spells the word correctly. Does Sarah interpret Blake's answer as "help"? Of course not, she is embarrassed by her mistake, and quite possibly angry with Blake for making her look dumb. Blake experiences a momentary feeling of superiority, which reinforces a pecking order with the most able students at the top and the

least able at the bottom. Sarah and Blake are unlikely to help each other study again unless forced into it.

Imagine the structure of this classroom has changed. Sarah and Blake have been asked to work together in a group. Now, their goal is to see how many points the two students can earn together for learning their spelling words. In a situation like this, Blake will make sure that he not only knows his spelling words but also that Sarah knows hers (Slavin, 1982). Sarah and Blake, feeling empowered 'together', will now work toward a common goal, helping and encouraging effort from each other. This all-for-one attitude will help others when facing setbacks, and create an environment that is less competitive and more cohesive.

One of the earliest and strongest findings in the laboratory research on cooperation is that people who cooperate learn to like each other better and form longer and lasting relationships. Study after study has found that cooperative learning promotes a greater liking of classmates. Students get to know each other. They get to know about different socioeconomic differences and about cultural differences. Students become more aware of the world around them and discover a more open attitude toward people of all kinds. Ultimately, behavioral problems begin to decrease in this environment because the students feel a part of the group, developing somewhat of an understanding for each other. Slavin (1982) stated:

> Social scientists have long advocated interethnic cooperation as a means of ensuring positive inter-group relations in desegregated settings. The

> famous Social Science Statement submitted as part of the *Brown v. Board of Education* school desegregation decision strongly emphasized that positive inter-group relations would arise from school desegregation if and only if students were involved in cooperative, equal-status interaction sanctioned by the school (p. 23).

Most of the research on cooperative education that we see today was borne out of the *Brown v. Board of Education* statement.

Cooperative learning exists when teachers have students work together in groups to achieve common goals. Students are usually given two responsibilities: to learn the material assigned and to ensure that all other members of their group learn what has been assigned. The success of group members is positively linked together and seen as outcomes, which are beneficial to the entire team. Structuring lessons cooperatively ensures that students have to explain what they are learning to each other, learn each other's points of view, give and receive support from classmates, and help other learners to dig below the superficial level of understanding. Individual performances are checked regularly to ensure all students are contributing to the learning process. The purpose of this structure is to make each group member a stronger individual. There should be a flow and pattern to this type of classroom learning, part of which is the theory of learning together, to perform it alone.

Johnson & Johnson (1991) feel that in order for a lesson to be structured cooperatively, five essential elements must be present. It is these five pieces, which distinguish cooperative learning from other traditional grouping styles. The

first of these elements is the concept of ‘positive interdependence’. Positive interdependence is the perception that you are linked in someway to the others in your group. This belief strengthens the learning of all members, sharing their resources, providing mutual support, and celebrating their joint success. In an environment of true positive interdependence, mutual goals and joint rewards are established and become a natural outcome. The group also has the opportunity to divide resources, giving each group member a part of the total information required to complete as an individual assignment. Positive interdependence also relies on establishing and playing complementary roles (reader, checker, encourager, elaborator). For a true cooperative learning condition, students must perceive that they are positively interdependent with other members of their group (Johnson & Johnson, 1991).

The second element necessary for a successful cooperative grouping strategy to work is ‘face –to-face’ interaction. Students must help each other, assisting, supporting, encouraging and praising each other for the efforts to learn. Interpersonal dynamics that only occur when student get involved in promoting each other are essential. Students must be allowed to explain to each other how to solve problems, discuss the nature of the concepts being learned, and teach one another. Accountability to peers, influencing each other’s reasoning, social modeling and support for ideas becomes inherent. In addition, the verbal and nonverbal responses of their group members provide important information. Concerns about the size of group are valid. This research also suggests, keeping groups small (from two to six members) as the perception that one’s input is

increasingly more valuable, as the group size decreases (Johnson & Johnson 1991).

The third element in this puzzle is ‘individual accountability’. It is important that each person is pulling his or her own weight and is not allowed to ride on the coat-tails of others. It is also important for group members to know who may need more assistance, support and or encouragement. In the end, structuring individual accountability through an assessment process, whether written or oral, will be necessary on the part of the teacher (Johnson & Johnson, 1991).

The fourth building block in this process is learning to function effectively together as a group, and develop ‘social skills’ conducive to the learning process. Placing students together who do not have a developed level of social skill and asking them to work together does not mean that they will cooperate. Social skills can be taught just as any other curricular area. “Cooperative skills include leadership, decision-making, trust-building, communication, conflict-management skills” (Johnson & Johnson, 1991).

The fifth, and last arena of discussion is ‘group processing’. This is when the students come back together at the end, and discusses how well they achieved their goals and how effective their working relationships were. This time also allows individuals and groups to synthesize and possibly evaluate the information developed and discuss achievements accomplished using this process (Johnson & Johnson, 1991).

Simply using groups to facilitate learning does not guarantee cooperation. Students who work in cooperative learning situations learn important social skills,

which do or should, facilitate cooperation. With these new skills, students are able to relate appropriately to others who are different from them in terms of social, intellectual or physical characteristics. Research has shown that consistent use of cooperative teaching methods helps students to learn not only the subject at hand, but also empathy and tolerance (Dishon & O'Leary, 1984). This technique can and should be used at all grade levels, pre-kindergarten through postdoctoral work. Collaboration at any age and any cognitive level has proven to be vastly rewarding.

Knowledge and skill of the cooperative learning process by the professional teacher is mandatory. Unfortunately, if the teacher is not well versed in the cooperative teaching style, the experience may lead to a domino effect of unsuccessful and nonproductive sessions. This type of frustration on the part of the student will decrease intrinsic motivation and increase the extrinsic motivators defined as a 'grade' to get the project 'over with', defeating the nature of cooperative groups. Effects on the teacher are as drastic. Teachers tend to slump back into traditional direct teaching approaches when unproductive cooperative learning activity continues in the classroom.

One of the biggest roles in the cooperative learning process is the role of the teacher. In the cooperative learning process, the teacher does not disappear to do 'other work'. The teacher stays actively involved to structure the lessons. There are many critical elements for the teacher to consider when using this process.

The first role of the modeling agent is to specify the objectives for the lesson. In every lesson, there should be an academic objective specifying the concepts and strategies to be learned and a social skill objective specifying the interpersonal or small group strategy to be utilized (Johnson & Johnson, 1991).

The second role of the teacher is to make a number of pre-instructional decisions (Johnson & Johnson, 1991). The size of the group must be determined. It is advantageous to keep the group sizes small (two to three persons). The teacher must also decide how the room will be arranged, what materials are necessary and the roles the students will be assigned. Slavin (1983) refers to the terms ‘task specialization’ to submit the use of techniques which each group member is given one particular part of the group task. In this process student’s focus on one specific topic relating to the main subject and report back to their teammates. This practice forces a certain degree of accountability, although weaknesses in the group become more noticeable (Johnson & Johnson, 1991).

The third and fourth roles of the teacher are ‘structuring individual accountability’ appropriately and structuring ‘intergroup cooperation’. Each student must feel responsible and motivated to learn the material in their possession, and to help the group create a polished assignment. Including intergroup cooperation encourages large group social skill by extending the support outside of the small group structure (Johnson & Johnson, 1991).

Monitoring and intervening is the rewarding part for teachers. As the teacher circulates to see whether the students understand the assignment and

the material, immediate feedback, reinforcement and praise can be given. If students have trouble with a task you can clarify, remediate, or elaborate on what you want them to know.

Intervening and teaching collaborative skills can be a delicate matter requiring tactful verbal skill. Successful conflict resolution is a learned skill. Allowing students to interact in mock conflicts can be useful for the teacher to head off and teach problem solving skills efficiently. Posting the rules for conflict resolution in the room can be extremely beneficial for students to refer back to when problems arise.

In order to improve, students need time and procedures for analyzing how well their group is functioning and how well they are using collaborative skills. According to Johnson & Johnson (1991), processing can be done by individuals, small groups, or the whole class. Johnson & Johnson (1991) also stated that teachers should have groups routinely list three things they did well in working together for the day, and one thing they will concentrate on tomorrow for improvement. Then summarize as a whole class.

Researchers differ on what they feel are the core learning objectives in cooperative grouping styles. For example, Dishon and O'Leary (1984) stated that the five most important principles, in which they feel underlie successful cooperative learning experiences are:

1. The principle of distributed leadership.
2. The principle of heterogeneous grouping.
3. The principle of positive interdependence.

4. The principle of social skill acquisition.
5. The principle of group autonomy (p. 5).

The last step in providing a quality cooperative learning experience is providing ‘closure’ for the students. Cooperative learning takes a lot of planning time. Self-reflections should occur by both the students and teachers, to rethink and receive feedback. Closure is also having groups share answers or papers, summarize major points in the lesson, or review important facts. Teaching students how to do a quality self reflection can be done quickly and easily using dated note cards. Simply, have each student date a 3x5 card, sit quietly and reflect individually on the project. What would they have done differently? How could the teacher have improved the process? What were the strengths and weaknesses of the group?

Effective teacher training is always an important issue when discussing alternative teaching strategies versus the traditional classroom style. Well-trained and retrained teachers are capable of translating the process more effectively and in a way that will positively affect a larger group. We want all students to be comfortable and knowledgeable about the multiple forms of differences that strengthen and enrich our society. Students, whom are able to adapt their thinking and extend their reach beyond the obvious or the commonplace, are indeed students who will become active and participative citizens (Stein & Hurd, 2000).

Liking of others, and feeling liked by others, is an obvious component to feeling worthwhile. It seems probable that students feel, and are, more

successful in their schoolwork when they work in teams, than when they work independently. This can also lead to an increased self-esteem. Whatever the reason, the effect of cooperative learning on self-esteem may be particularly important for its long-term effects on mental health. A student who can say that they had a cooperative, mutually supportive experience in school may be less likely to be antisocial, withdrawn and or depressed later in life. (Slavin, 1982)

Another special feature of cooperative learning is its inexpensiveness and ease of use. In the fiscal crunch our schools are facing, this is a cheap way to rewire the schools for success, and boost intrinsic and extrinsic motivation levels of students. Teachers have virtually all the materials they will need. Being able to divide children into groups, give them material to study together, assess them based on their team performance requires little or no expense, and the nice thing is once it is planned it can be used over and over again in a variety of settings with innumerable curricular arenas. Detailed teachers manuals are also available to those who like to have a path laid out for them.

There is ample evidence for the need to teach students to work together. Students are able to give and receive information, offer support and encouragement, negotiate conflict, and learn to communicate effectively (Stein & Hurd, 2000). “It is undeniable that the product of a truly cooperative successful partnership or group is often far superior to what any one individual-no matter how smart- (sic) could have done by himself or herself” (Stein & Hurd, 2000 p. xii). If we want our future generations to finesse their way through a multicultural

society effectively, we must give them the skills to do it. Isolation will rarely occur in the workplace of the 21st century. Even telecommuters use conference calling to more effectively communicate, evaluate and assess company business.

Motivation and Children

What is the purpose of our schools? Why are students so difficult to motivate in the classroom? As educators, we must face the realization that the world has changed. Most teachers teach as they were taught. Frankly, that usually means using a direct teaching style, which in the age of high tech computers, digital games mixed with fast paced life styles, does not equate to the child of the past. It leaves us faced with the dilemma of children who prefer the multifaceted interaction of a Nintendo 64, game boy, and numerous other digitized creations of today's world. These children are more motivated to get home to learn something new from outside sources, rather than being excited for the next challenge they may face in the classroom. Expected doldrums and chronic yearly repetition of subject matter force children into unmotivating circumstances in which productivity is almost nonexistent. As this concept bounces off many teachers, some are jumping on the wave of new teaching strategies that will motivate our future generations to absorb our pedagogy.

The ability to critically evaluate problems and events by analysis and comparison is an important outcome of our classrooms (Whitbourne & Weinstock, 1979). Drawing conclusions based on the necessary information and correct process is invaluable. One's beliefs concerning outcomes of an action are also important. High self-efficacy will not produce competent performances when

requisite skills are lacking (Ames & Ames, 1989). Perceived outcomes, or how much desire a person maintains for an outcome, will also play a dramatic role in the day-to-day environment.

Motivation correlates directly to the praise and reward system. Providing effort feedback for success and difficulty conveys markedly different efficacy information. Consequently, as children work on a task they should become increasingly more aware of their self-efficacy. Schunk (cited in Ames & Ames, 1989) stated:

> Telling children that effort is the reason for their successes should support their perceptions of skill improvement and convey that they can continue to perform well with hard work, telling them that they need to work hard following difficulty might convey that they are not doing well. They may conclude that they are not very capable and may wonder whether more effort will produce better results (p. 20).

As teachers, we must retrain our own thought processes. Instead of relaying the message to children to work harder, we must praise them for the effort shown and recognize when they are reaching beyond their norm. This is the time for praise. Relaying the latter message, that for the majority of us, hard work, not ability, can propel us to the next level of cognition. Similarly, this may not always lead to greater persistence. At the beginning of a task students may persist because of the teachers' effort to keep them on task, but as time goes on and differentiated and cooperative strategies become more common place, students should fall into a natural pattern of understanding the cause and effect

relationship of task orientation, persistence, and effort exhumed producing greater output (Ames & Ames, 1989).

Intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and amotivation have all been issues of studies for a long time. This research does not delve into the discussion of handing out a letter grade for effort or the age-old act of ability grouping. Although, we must keep in mind that these commonplace strategies do have an affect on the motivation levels and reasons for motivation seen blanketing America's classrooms. For individuals to generate motivation to learn in learning situations, it is necessary for them to see that they have the natural capacity to be motivated to learn under the right internal and external conditions (McCombs, n.d.). For a variety of reasons, our educational system operates to determine how much and of what our students learn, when they learn it, how they learn it, and how long it will take. There is a critical dimension missing in this equation. Students need opportunities to learn self-regulation skills. This skill becomes even more crucial later in life when the students are expected to control how, where and when they will study or complete assigned tasks. Can young people expect to learn this self-regulatory function when they are conforming and tunneling down the same path as everyone else? How can we expect original and independent thought processes when students come to rely on teacher directed routes? Can students be expected to put themselves in jeopardy of going outside the teachers comfort zone, and risk being labeled as 'one of those students'. Furthermore, school policies and practices must be supportive of new understandings about motivation in learning (McCombs, n.d.).

Is the learning process reversed? Do we teach children to write before they have a genuine need to communicate in the written form? Children are learning to read before they want to find out the information contained inside of books (“Learning process reversed”, 1994). A student is asked to analyze history before they are exposed to and understand current political underpinnings. This reversed process delivers education through a pre-requisite driven scheme. Curriculum planners do try to predict the future by exposing children to ideas and concepts that they feel are necessary to future educational growth. It does seem almost impossible to intrinsically motivate students when the basic building blocks are divorced from the context of something the student really wants to participate in and learn. This fragmentation becomes an impossible maze of incongruity. This incongruity becomes a separation of tasks that divides itself into topics and grade levels. Children are told to engage and stay on task but have nothing from their past to relate the task to. Absorption becomes futile, and long lasting, meaningful comprehension eliminated.

Teachers seem limited to three roles, selecting material, presenting that material, and then administering tests that seek to determine exactly how much has been absorbed (Teaching children in the classroom, n.d.). This transfer model limits the teacher to the roles of selector, presenter, and evaluator, what about the roles of motivator, challenger, and critic and what about the roles of brainstormer, manager, and leader? Each of these roles leads to a different style of teaching, and each plays an important part in helping students learn a class of knowledge worth knowing. We may assume that even though a teacher is not

designated by a school district to be a leader or manager that they should take on this role naturally. The previous statement may be true, but only the exceptional teacher will summon up the energy and effort required to go beyond what the system requires. Fried (2001) stated:

> All of these children become vulnerable within a system of education that offers mostly humdrum, low-energy, task-oriented compliance in place of the intensity, enthusiasm and joyfulness with which an infant learner grasps at understanding of the world. Seymour Sarason tells us that we cannot hope to create contexts of sustained and positive learning for children if we do not also create such contexts for teachers (p. 2).

Something in our schools undermines a child's inherent belief that she or he is a natural born learner. Despite the ongoing effort of our elementary classroom teachers who promote and celebrate, intense and purposeful learning there are to many children who feel their learning impulses diminish as they proceed through our 'graded system'. Once students encounter formal schooling, many children become disenfranchised as learners and victims of our traditional schools (Fried, 2001). Children who like to learn through physical movement or hands on application or those who need the steady presence of an adult role model are too often cast aside or labeled as unreachable. Some students have intense emotional needs or learning disabilities. Others need or crave more individual attention than they are likely to receive in our schools or at home. We must also look at those who are middle of the road in academic range and are often ignored because they present few problems to the teacher, and do not

impress us as especially bright or gifted (Fried, 2001). Motivation to learn must be stimulated from the outside. McCombs (n.d.) stated:

> An important distinction is whether choice is present and the degree of choice allowed. In many learning situations that are externally imposed, choices are limited to control and management of internal thoughts and feelings; behavioral are few. Another important distinction, therefore, is whether the learner must exert effort to manage feelings arising from negative thinking about external conditions (e.g., teacher, curriculum, instructional practices) (p. 3).

As teachers, we must continually remind ourselves that learning is one of the most fascinating and rewarding activities for human beings. The desire to learn, to discover, to figure something out, and to be able to do something well enough to claim it as one's own, must surely be as strong as any impulse in the human soul (McCombs, n.d.). The early years are so full of learning that its velocity and abundance cannot be captured by any amount of documentation by even the most skillful author.

It is challenging for educators who view all children as passionate learners to propel those feelings up through the secondary level. What if learning was a renewable resource? A resource that when extinguished by natural or unnatural consequences could be reengineered of its own volition. Unfortunately, children find themselves in the precarious situation of having to regenerate themselves individually, often lacking the intrinsic or extrinsic motivation to comply with changing lesson plans. Educators often expect, through utilizing boring teaching

strategies that children will keep the flame of interest burning or can sustain years of mental laziness only to ignite or reengineer their flame at will. Teacher expectation can get in the way of reasonable learning expectations.

Passionate learners are all around us and within us. It is the child who questions, who daydreams, who invents problems and tries to solve them. It is those who cry out at injustice and want to know how to make life a little fairer for all. It is the children who look back and wonder why things turned out the way they did, and it is the child who reads a fairy tale and connects its moral universe, seamlessly, with that of her own imagination (Fried, 2001). These are passionate intrinsically motivated learners. So motivated that they can connect what they see, feel, hear and touch with the world around them, and can formulate questions comprehensible to a given challenge. Fried stated:

> But few schools have the resources or the will to allow these differing models to operate freely. The child who “pokes around” may be accused of stalling. The one who “dives right in” may be faulted for lack of impulse control or for not waiting his turn. The analytic learner may be chided for wasting everyone’s time by “asking too many questions”. The social learner may be admonished to “sit down” and do your own work” while the visual learner may be told to “ listen more carefully” to instructions (p. 4).

These children may feel that his or her natural way of learning is no longer useable in this, conform or reform society. They may find that their traditional way of learning is now putting them in an awkward position or on the bad side of the teacher. Students do need to learn the dynamics of the classroom and learn to

use their manners in public places, but some may need additional support found when using a more flexible teaching strategy.

Parents have a critical role to play in helping the child feel secure and valued. It is easy to forget that children who are not thriving in school are passionate learners also. They may have a different way of hearing, touching and feeling but the strategies these children use can be uncovered with great diligence on the part of parents and teachers. The under motivated or unchallenged child who seems so far behind or the child who already knows it all, from their perspective, are the learners that seem to be the most problematic or who make trouble for those around them as well as the teacher. We cannot overlook the learning potential in any of our children. Fried (2001) goes on to say that: “If we focus only on their school problems or successes, we may succumb to the “medical model” wherein any deviation in a child’s academic path is viewed as if it were some sort of disease or dysfunction that must be treated with a dose of this or that – extra homework, tutoring, Ritalin (*sic*) (p. 4).

Effective teachers are excellent leaders and role models. Spence Rogers (1999) found that:

> Excellent leaders focus on creating and managing context (environment, conditions, situations) in which people want to work hard, engage, make a difference, and in which they are willing to take risks. Poor leaders (people with whom others do not to work or follow) tend to try to manage people by trying to get them to do things in preprescribed ways and timelines (p. 7).

Determining who our students are first and what is important to them is critical to functioning as an effective leader. These teachers will unlock the intrinsic motivation secured inside each of our students.

In July 2001, a psychometric investigation of the academic motivation scale was used to study the effects of self-concept and academic achievement. The study found that people give many reasons for their academic successes or failures. These reasons, or attributions, include aptitude or ability, effort, luck, and help or hindrance from others (Cokley, Bernard, Cunningham, & Motoike, 2001). An attributional account was also utilized to examine expectancies and the paradox of high self-esteem and low academic performance. Cokley et al. (2001) stated:

> Among the most researched self-constructs in academic motivation studies is self-concept (Bong & Clark, 1999). Academic self-concept refers to attitudes and feelings students have about their intellectual or academic skills, especially when comparing themselves with other students. (Cokley, 2000b; Lent, Brown, & Gore, 1997). Specifically, academic self-concept has been found to be related to academic achievement (Reynolds, 1998) and is considered a component of the general self-concept (Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976) (p. 3).

The investigation also showed that academic self-concept is positively correlated with grade point average (GPA), self esteem and the ability to control oneself behaviorally. Students who show a high GPA in most cases showed a higher self-esteem and better self-concept. Making statements about the nature

of the relationship between the two constructs was somewhat challenging for the researchers. However, because both academic motivation and academic self-concept have been found to independently relate to academic achievement, it may be logical to suggest that more self-determined behavior would be related to a higher academic self-concept (Cokley et al.). Researchers were very cautious when interpreting the results with different ethnic groups for whom intrinsic motivation may not solely promote positive education and psychological outcomes. In conclusion, this study found that further research is needed to examine the factor structure of academic motivation among different ethnic and gender groups. In addition, research on intrinsic motivation and how it relates with academic achievement warranted further investigation (Cokley et al.).

Numerous techniques have been developed and applied to address the increasing need of motivation in children. Many are consistent with group learning and differentiated teaching strategies. Oppenheimer (2001) stated: “Specific goals establish a set direction to apply one’s energies; however, this may also mean having to change or do things that are unfamiliar or uncomfortable” (p. 1). The question then becomes, how do we change student behavior to achieve a goal? Lewin’s (1951) stated in Oppenheimer (2001):

> Classic change model of unfreezing, change, and refreezing can be applied in the classroom setting to address this issue. The unfreezing part of this model requires dissatisfaction with the status quo and acceptance of the need for doing things differently. The change stage is the

> implementation of the new way of doing things, and the refreezing occurs when the change has been found to be successful (p. 2).

Now we are presented with the challenge of developing a new way of learning. The unfreezing process can be very difficult for students who have studied and who have been taught in the same way for generations. Exposure to the new methods of learning, that integrate real life experience, should unlock the spirit and invite students to invest themselves in their personal work. The refreezing occurs when the students receive positive feedback from the instructor for their progress and effort in attaining their goals (Oppenheimer, 2001). By investing themselves in the work and putting a little of their own personal experiences into it, they have a developed a new way to learn. Most students enjoy the nature of this type of education and if executed in the proper way, and with the continued education teachers need to apply these concepts, students will not only find themselves more involved in the learning process, but also engaged in the deeper meaning of it.

How do we view the student in the educational process? We all know that education is concerned with the development of the ‘whole’ student. The whole student can be divided into three parts: What the student thinks and knows, (the cognitive domain), what the student feels about what he thinks and knows, (the affective domain), and what the student does as a result of his knowledge, thought and feelings (the psychomotor domain) (Morgan & Saxton, 1994). No part is of greater or lesser importance than the other. So why is it that schools tend to concentrate on the cognitive and psychomotor development of their

students, and leave the affective to educating itself? The fact that the school systems are of public domain, and in the public domain there is no place for emotions, attitudes, values and beliefs. These things are regarded as personal and therefore, private (Morgan & Saxton, 1994).

Developing life long learners who are intrinsically motivated, display intellectual curiosity, find learning enjoyable and continue seeking knowledge after their formal instruction has ended, should be the major goal of education (Small, 2000). In its early years motivational research stemmed mainly from the work place. It studied how we could produce more output in a shorter amount of time, and-or get our employees to work harder and faster, producing a better quality of good.

Research that is more recent focuses on the identification of effective techniques for enhancing instructional designs whether they are industrial or educational. Applying some of the same theories, researcher John M. Keller of Florida State University, developed a model he entitled, 'ARCS, Model of Motivational Design'. This acronym stands for, attention, relevance, confidence and satisfaction. Each of these categories is broken down into sub-categories. The term, 'attention', focuses on the arousal of curiosity, and incorporating diverse teaching strategies to address variability in student need. 'relevance' is addressed by matching student needs and motives with the world around them. The third term, 'confidence' is related to learning requirements conveyed in an easily understood manner, or use of a rubric constructed for self-evaluation? Are there opportunities for success in different areas, does the teacher provide

feedback on the quality of the students' performance, and acknowledge the students' dedication and hard work? Finally, 'satisfaction' refers back to the teacher's ability to providing an intrinsic experience with extrinsic rewards and how successful the endeavor was (Small, 2000).

Since the ARCS Model was introduced in the early 1980's several instruments have been developed for assessing the motivation quality of instructional situations, however the appeal and ease of application encountered while using the ARCS Model has made it a popular choice by educators.

"You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink, so 'salt' his oats" (Desrochers, 2000 p. 1). A well-managed classroom more often comes from thorough curriculum planning and instruction, interesting, success-oriented activities, and frequent feedback to students. Desrochers (2000) goes on to say:

> As adults, aren't we more motivated when we find the new learning experience interesting, feel successful, and receive feedback? Conversely, how do we react when we experience a poorly planned, uninteresting activity, fear failure, and receive no feedback regarding our progress (p. 1)?

CHAPTER THREE

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter includes a critical analysis of literature, as well as a summary of key points from chapter two. It will also include recommendations to teachers, parents, administrators, as well as, colleges and universities in regard to the use of differentiated and cooperative teaching strategies and the key elements necessary in these strategies to ensure intrinsic motivation be excavated from children.

Summary

Today's schools are bombarded with good and bad ideas. Some are utilized and forgotten and others are implemented very poorly. Teachers tend to shy away from teaching strategies and methods that may take them too far away from the status quo of their present school system. Unfortunately, many teachers lack the training and ongoing support of administration required to go head-on with a myriad of students who face social, emotional, and cognitive needs. Schools are forced to react to new trends, but are distracted by other competing trends. Professional development workshops and conferences are too often treated as self-contained ideas and are divorced from a supportive context (Martin-Kniep, 2000).

Teachers feel pressured to 'cover' curriculum or to prepare students for standardized tests. This results in a curriculum that is content-driven rather than learner-based. Motivation for children to learn under these conditions becomes

almost nonexistent. Why then do teachers continue to educate in this manner? “If the goal is efficiency, the text and the formal curriculum will prevail. The exception to this occurs in kindergarten and preschool education, mostly because young children’s readiness to respond as passive learners is very limited” (Martin-Kniep, 2000 p .1).

Conclusion

As teachers encounter mixed ability classrooms, the need for diverse teaching strategies becomes increasingly necessary. Differentiated learning helps to scaffold our children’s knowledge upward by using the building blocks of current knowledge. Bridging experiences from the real world to the classroom helps children recognize the value of educational content, thus intrinsically motivating learners. Physical movement within the classroom and proactive teaching propels pupils to new levels of cognition. Differentiated teaching strategies are not only the diversity of activity found behind the door of the classroom, but also the constant questioning and assessing of students to master topics. Evaluation cannot successfully be accomplished and recorded for permanent grades, if each student’s level of mastery has not been obtained. This may mean that students are at different levels the entire school year. The most important aspect of this is to allow freedom and flexibility, coaching and tutoring, to gain the highest level attainable from each individual learner.

Being successful in devising proper grouping strategies is crucial. Cooperative learning enhances sharing and listening skills, oral language, critical thinking, social ability, as well as teamwork. A basic concept of cooperative

education is that students are assigned roles to play. The students are immediately held accountable and are responsible for a task preparing them for self-ownership of challenges. Not only do participants become accountable to the group for the quality of their output, but also in return are provided a safe environment to work and express themselves. This new concept needs to be practiced with your students before diving into a large project. Students need to understand the basics of the cooperative process and classes need to establish ground rules for interaction and conflict resolution that are necessary and allowable for group work.

Various sources suggest that ‘teachers’ do not motivate children; children motivate themselves. Teachers are the catalyst that prepares students’ intellect for greatness. We must be aware of what we say and do every minute in the classroom. We influence our students with verbal and nonverbal cues. Students too often uncover their own personality later in life and have to relearn who they really are. How easy it is for teachers to present material and retire to a desk, while students from early levels fend for themselves, struggling with concepts and learning that being uncomfortable is a natural state while at school. We need to free our students to be themselves. We need to organize and model appropriate interaction from a very young age. How can we expect a shy fifth grader to raise his hand to answer a question, when they have not been exposed frequently to group discussion? How can we force children to read aloud one by one when they are distraught over making a mistake that may embarrass them?

Teachers often complain that cooperative and differentiated learning is hard to set up and takes a great amount of time to prepare in the early elementary years. Not if you begin the very first day of kindergarten and the children grow to discover that this is the way they learn. Learning cooperative strategies in the kindergarten classroom would look like children in groups of 2-3 coloring on the floor together discussing the topic they are drawing. It may also look like alphabet centers, where two students work together to put the letters in the correct order and then teach each other the sounds each letter makes. In the first grade classroom, it looks like two children reading a story together helping each other sound out words and becoming comfortable with each other. If the process is started at six and seven years old children become very comfortable taking a risk and answering a question in front of their peers even though they might not be sure of the answer. These children feel comfortable with who they are. They feel comfortable in their environment, and they feel comfortable because they are part of the group. There will always be those children who are naturally shy and uncomfortable in front of people. Could the numbers of those children be significantly lessened if they were casual about expressing themselves without the fear of total humiliation by his or her peers? Yes, without a doubt. If this was the realization from the very first day of school, and was combined with 'teacher and administrator' modeled character curriculum, we may have a different society graduating from our high schools in 12 years.

The teachers themselves very often ignore the power of the teachers' word. What an enormous responsibility we carry to model, mold and generate

productive citizens for the United States of America. We hold the power. We are the only single group of professionals in America that come in contact with almost every single child in our country. If we prescribe negative self-fulfilling prophecies for them, they will most likely respond to us in that mode. In contrast, if we believe in the best for all children, keep our own opinions locked behind tight doors where no child can hear us gossiping, and provide children with caring and praise for the effort they exhume, we could expect to see a completely different and positive outcome.

How excited children would be if they knew that each teacher truly cared and was there to help them. It would not be hard. We only need to model our expectations from a very young age. We need to get children talking and discussing with one another. Having fun in school is not taboo it should be a natural part of the learning process. Children know when to have ‘manners’ and when they can ‘slack-off’. Our schools have become the slacking off point even for our brightest. It just is not any fun anymore, so why should they care when they can read a book at home and get more out of it. Teachers need to take their profession back, out of the student’s hands. The students are in control and making some of you wish for early retirement. Reclaim what is yours, be creative, and get them interested. This researcher wants to see light bulbs going off in her classroom. Not because the students are just grasping a concept that should have been grasp two to three years prior, but because the teacher has just turned up the power source and the student’s really are getting brighter. Turning

up someone's self-esteem by 'turning up' the power source, can be the most rewarding part of being a teacher.

Recommendations

We are a top down society. Administrators at all levels need to advocate for children. Teacher training programs at all universities and colleges should have competent and experienced classroom teachers at their helm. Evaluating the need of new educators is vitally important. How can someone evaluate a student teacher in a classroom environment when that person has never taught in a classroom? How can that same authority figure teach courses at a post secondary level to the countries newest perspective teachers, when they have not been near a real classroom for years, or completed research which requires them to invest personal time to update their own credentials. As a researcher my hope would be that all college and university professors whom are teaching new teachers to teach, at all levels, have at least a few years of classroom teaching. If they are well into a career with a university or college they should be required to participate, at various levels, in classroom activity. There should be licensing standards reflecting that they also have completed continuing education in 'their area of expertise. How difficult it would be to teach a course on a topic you have no experience in and or recent (within 10 years) hands-on experience. How can professors teaching at colleges and universities keep up with curriculum, administrative style, and the realism of being in a classroom day after day with the same 15 – 35 students when they have not experienced it. It would be like

asking a doctor to do surgery on a patient after reading a book or watching another doctor perform it and then proceeding to perform it himself.

Parents need to come forward and demand that new teachers are trained properly. Utilization of public monies fund public schools. As long as the fiduciary responsibility lies directly in the laps of every parent, why should the parents not speak out? Parents need to ask their school districts to administer in-services for teachers that are valuable to today's child. In-services should teach differentiation for a culturally and cognitively diverse groups of students. Cooperative learning skills should be taught to and learned by teachers, via incorporating the skills into their own in-services. 'Educators' as well have the need to know one another and be able to relate on a personal level. As parent's we need to ask that teachers become almost virtuous in patience and tolerance. Teachers need to become more aware of children's needs instead of tuning out because they have had it for the year. Parents need to know they are getting what they pay for.

Guidance counselors unite! Step out of your offices. We need you in our hallways greeting our children in the morning and saying good-bye in the afternoon. We need them to know 'you' and what your function is. Students should be able to find adults inside a school building that they can trust. They should find comfort in knowing someone personally, who can help in challenging situations, you are on the front line. Get to know each one of the children in your building. Play a game of cards with someone who needs a break. Try beating a first grader at checkers and use it as an opportunity to speak about

competitiveness and other children's feelings. Take a group of kids out for ice cream when they have perfect attendance. Remember the student who did not have breakfast or the one who had to get himself up and off to school that morning. Remember the children.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has allocated funds for district and state research. Demographic and socioeconomic research is available to the public that has created the necessary links from and correlating to standardized test scores. Over time, we may begin to see patterns. As teacher's we need to know how to access this information and comprehend it thoroughly. We need to show parents and government officials the facts about our students, prove that we have done our jobs, instead of being shut down for being a failing school. We have the ability, with no further funding, to interpret these results and begin to tailor our education to the diverse population, to begin to make changes in thinking and attitude. In an ideal world, we would be able to adjust, as a group of professionals to the changing needs of our society.

New research needs to be conducted and spread through out the country. Not as a fad but as what really is effective. This world is changing at a rapid pace. Children 'are' being left behind. Let us stand up and fight for diversity in strategy, quality in new teacher training and dismissal of outdated, inexperienced personnel who organize and proclaim their superiority over our current system because they have been there the longest. Armstrong (1998) stated:

> I'm reminded of a colleagues remark at a recent conference: 'Schools, prisons, and mental hospitals are the only institutions in society where if

> you don't go, they come to get you'. Students who are not given significant choices about what they can learn or how they are able to learn it soon either give in and adapt, or give up and tune out (p. 61).

Teachers beware that you do not make yourselves obsolete. Help administrator's put children's academic needs first in budgetary decision-making. Demand, as a top priority, that colleges and universities begin to train teachers toward the types of children they will really encounter in the classroom.

Rogers (1999) stated that, "We can't fatten cows by weighing them" (p. 159). In the same regard, we cannot improve student learning by evaluating them and assigning grades. Motivation comes from 'feeding' the students through teaching and assessing until they have reached a quality level. Then we can 'weigh' them with evaluation and grades (Rogers, 1999).

Motivation of children can be deeply enhanced with the use of differentiated and cooperative teaching strategies. A direct teaching approach is archaic and not suitable for the diversity of children who exist today. As you sit in your classroom, peer out and put yourself in the shoes of each child. If you have 25 children seated, you will have been to 25 different households, 25 diverse cultural backgrounds, have been exposed to a myriad of family structures, and know why all of them learn using different strategies.

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